

303 noise to increase; Sun City West, Surprise affected
By Matt Loeschman, Independent Newspapers

The noise from Loop 303 affecting Sun City West and Sun City Grand has some residents calling for action.

During a PORA forum held May 10 at the R.H. Johnson Lecture Hall, residents asked Maricopa County District 4 Supervisor Max Wilson how he might assist those living closest to the loop.

“There are four million people in Maricopa County fighting for the \$20 million available for noise abatement measures,” Mr. Wilson explained. “We must convince the Arizona Department of Transportation there is a pressing need on this side of the Valley to mitigate the noise coming from Loop 303. The best case would be to have sound walls built first before the rest of the loop is completed.”

Mr. Wilson warned residents that traffic along the Loop 303, already heavy at some points of the day, will only increase in the future.

“Eventually, this will be a full, six-lane freeway,” the supervisor noted. “Sound measures will be implemented at that time but it makes sense to get them in there sooner rather than later.”

Even though the loop is not complete, Loop 303 is fast becoming one of the more popular routes in the West Valley. Besides carrying regular traffic, it is also a major truck route, which adds to the noise issues along the highway.

Whereas the freeway is built at a lower level near Sun City Grand, it runs higher north of Sun City West — and with no sound barriers to protect residents from traffic noise, complaints are piling up.

Randy Fuller, a Sun City West resident and RCSCW director, said traffic patterns on the loop have changed over the past few years.

“We would encourage ADOT vehemently to complete further noise studies,” Mr. Fuller said. “We know the noise parameters are different now than they were just a few years ago.”



Maricopa County District 4 Supervisor Max Wilson, left, discusses Loop 303 noise issues last week at the R.H. Johnson Lecture Hall in Sun City West. Also pictured is PORA director Bob Jones.Independent Newspapers/Matt Loeschman

Other residents complained of racing motorcycles and loud truck noises between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. nightly. They claim their sleep is constantly disrupted and home values near Loop 303 are dropping.

One resident compared the truck noise to that of “low-flying aircraft.”

PORA Director Bob Jones said he recently received an email from ADOT representative Tim Tait.

“This (letter) indicated that ADOT believes the noise averages about 50-56 decibels and 64 decibels is the threshold for implementing noise abatement,” Mr. Jones said. “I’m afraid we may be on our own on this one.”

ADOT in the past few months resumed control of Loop 303 from the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

PORA vice president Chuck Ullman said averages are not the way to measure Loop 303 noise.

“There are spikes and there are dips and that’s the convenient way to measure it,” Mr. Ullman said. “You must remember, though, that people are trying to sleep during a lot of the high-noise periods.”

Mr. Wilson asked PORA officials to draft a letter to ADOT expressing the need to expedite sound mitigation measures such as sound walls and rubberized asphalt.

PORA officials agreed, and Maricopa Association of Governments officials will review the document before it is sent to the state department of transportation.

Eric Anderson of MAG agreed mitigating Loop 303 noise is a pressing need.

“Certainly if it does not meet the threshold today, it will soon,” he explained. “We plan to work with ADOT on this and we believe we can get the walls built earlier than the normal process. We will recommend ADOT complete some computer models in this area to see how the noise is once traffic picks up. We plan to make a solid case.”

Sun City Grand residents also have problems with noise emanating from the loop.

Surprise resident Julie Phillips believes something must be done to help alleviate the problem.

“It seems to be getting worse and worse,” she said. “I really feel for those people that live close to the highway. It’s only going to get noisier as that road is built out.”

The county supervisor said his office would keep a close eye on the status of the project.

“We will continue to monitor this,” Mr. Wilson explained. “We know it’s a problem because we live here — it’s a matter of convincing ADOT to expedite the noise abatement.”

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